

Rev. Russell, Richard B.

From Page Edit Page Other Page

DANVILLE, VA.
BEE

E. 15.110

JAN 9 1967

Outlook For Congress

With the 90th Congress convening tomorrow, major issues seem to be the war in Vietnam and the nation's economy—although initial skirmishes over such things as Adam Clayton Powell and rules changes may provide some opening fireworks. What transpires in the months ahead depends largely on the "new look" of this Congress.

COMPOSITION

Despite substantial Republican gains in the November elections, the Democratic Party remains in firm control, numerically speaking. In the Senate, there are 64 Democrats and 36 Republicans; in the House, 248 Democrats and 187 Republicans.

However, the "Conservative Coalition" — Southern Democrats and conservative Republicans — has been restored as a formidable force. From the latter days of the New Deal on through 1964, this coalition killed much of the social welfare legislation.

Liberals ran wild in 1965 but encountered more opposition last year as the flood tide of the "Great Society" began to ebb. The coalition successfully side-tracked the Administration's 1966 civil rights proposal; saved Right-to-work laws and trimmed foreign aid—in its major accomplishments.

With the shift to the GOP of 47 House seats and three Senate seats in the November elections, the coalition's prospects for the 90th Congress are good. New social welfare proposals will face heavy going—as will the funding of the war on poverty and the demonstration cities program.

ISSUES

Although President Johnson continues to insist America can afford both guns and butter, the coalition is far from convinced. Fears are voiced that a tax increase would bring on a recession. Since the costs of the war are sky-rocketing, more money will have to come from some place. The President still hasn't made it definite, but his Congressional leaders are acting as if no major tax increases will be sought. Hence domestic spending would have to be cut . . . and the "Great Society" is the most likely place.

Congress did not even wait for the opening gavel before starting re-examination of Vietnam policy. Sen. Richard B. Russell's special CIA sub-committee opened its hearings today . . . and other

hottest issues of this session.

The draft law, which expires July 1, has been under heavy attack. Numerous changes have been proposed and, without a doubt, there will be a lot of debate. When the smoke clears, few major changes are likely.

Foreign policy, and foreign aid loom large as always. Labor laws will be given a new look in the light of current strikes effecting health, safety, education and the war effort.

All this is but a sampling.

SIDESHOWS

As the gentlemen gathered in Washington today, they approached the promised showdown on Rep. Powell, D-N. Y., with a complete lack of enthusiasm. They know that Powell should go, yet they fear departure from precedent—or do they share his guilt? The move to deny Powell his seat had slowed to a snail's pace this morning, following Speaker John W. McCormack's expressed opposition. The gentlemen were looking for a way to side-step the whole thing.

On the other hand, liberals were screaming for the scalp of Rep. William M. Colmer, D-Miss., who is due to succeed Virginia's Howard W. Smith as chairman of the powerful House Rules Committee. Their sole reason: he is a Southern conservative.

When Smith and other conservatives controlled the Rules Committee, House Liberals forced through the 21-Day Rule. This prevented the committee from bottling-up bills approved by other committees for more than 21 days. Now the Liberals have control of the committee and they will try to do away with the rule—so they can do what Judge Smith used to do.

These same Liberals also are promising a fight tomorrow to change the anti-filibuster rule. At present, a two-thirds vote is required to cut off debate in the Senate. They are seeking to change this to a simple majority and the effort could run into a filibuster at the opening of the session.

LONG SUMMER

Although the session hasn't started, there is speculation over the adjournment date. Because of the complexities of the issues rather than the prospects of major new legislation, the session likely will extend through the summer and into the fall. One thing is definite: they will debate, hesitate, vacillate and procrastinate for months, then stampede to adjournment.